United Nations A/66/PV.124

General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

124th plenary meeting
Friday, 3 August 2012, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Agenda item 34 (*continued*)

Prevention of armed conflict

Draft resolution (A/66/L.57*)

The President: Before we proceed, I would like to remind members that the debate on agenda item 34 and its sub-item (a) will take place at a later date, to be announced.

Members will recall that, under agenda item 34, the Assembly adopted resolution 66/253, at its 97th plenary meeting, held on 16 February, and heard a report by the Secretary-General, in accordance with paragraph 12 of that resolution, on the implementation of the resolution at its 99th plenary meeting, on 2 March.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

We are meeting at a time of unprecedented violence in the Syrian Arab Republic. Recently, Syrian Government forces intensified their military operations against areas presumed to be strongholds of anti-Government armed groups, in particular the cities of Damascus and Aleppo. Gross violations of human rights are occurring on a daily basis, in the context of increasingly militarized fighting. The League of Arab States, the Human Rights Council and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have repeatedly stated that those acts may amount to crimes against humanity and other international crimes.

I am deeply concerned about this horrifying escalation. I condemn the continued widespread atrocities and violations of international humanitarian law by the Syrian authorities. There are horrifying reports of mass killings, rape, extrajudicial executions torture and the deliberate targeting of civilians. All parties to the conflict have responsibilities to adhere to under international law. Those responsible must be held accountable.

It is time to act. Words are not enough. The international community has the responsibility to act without further delay. I deeply regret that the Security Council has again been unable to unite and take collective action to put an immediate end to the appalling crisis in Syria. The deadlock in the Council sends the wrong signal to all parties in the Syrian conflict.

In times of deadlock, the General Assembly has a role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Today, once again, the Assembly proves its power and authority. We have to provide the necessary assistance to the people of the Syrian Arab Republic and find an all-inclusive and peaceful solution to the crisis.

The General Assembly resolution adopted on 16 February (resolution 66/253) paved the way for the appointment of Kofi Annan as the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and, subsequently, the adoption of his six-point plan. His has not been an easy task. That is why I expressed my regret as soon as I learned yesterday of Mr. Annan's intention not to renew his mandate when it expires at the end of this month.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

12-44939 (E)

Please recycle

That announcement — which I can understand — obliges us more than ever to resolutely persevere and to take additional measures to protect the Syrian people from the continuing atrocities to which they are being subjected.

Today we build still further on resolution 66/253. The six-point plan is not being implemented. The violence is increasing. We gather today to face our responsibilities. We have no choice but to take necessary action in a credible way. The credibility of the United Nations is at stake, as is regional stability in the Middle East. The lives of thousands of innocent people depend upon our response. I urge all Member States to fulfil our task by voting in support of the draft resolution before us today.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: Eight days ago, I visited Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Srebrenica represents one of the darkest chapters in the Organization's history, a time when the international community failed to protect civilians from slaughter. Partly in reaction to genocide in Srebrenica and in Rwanda, world leaders came together under the aegis of the United Nations to support the concept of the responsibility to protect. Governments renewed their commitment to protect their populations, including particularly vulnerable communities, and leaders agreed to work collectively when faced with Governments unable, or unwilling, to protect their citizens. Today, we are all witnesses to the horrors of Syria being ripped apart by violence. I thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this important meeting.

As we meet here, Aleppo, one of the most ancient and storied cities in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the epicentre of a vicious battle between the Syrian Government and those who wish to replace it. The acts of brutality that are being reported may constitute crimes against humanity or war crimes. Such acts must be investigated and the perpetrators held to account.

Many thousands of Syrians have been displaced by, and are at risk from, the fighting. Many desperately need humanitarian assistance. Despite repeated verbal acceptances of the six-point plan endorsed by the Security Council, both the Government and the opposition continue to rely on weapons, not diplomacy, in the belief that they will win through violence. But there are no winners in Aleppo today — or anywhere else in the country. The losers in the escalating battle are the people of Syria.

What is especially tragic about Syria is that the current catastrophe was avoidable. Nearly 18 months ago, knowledgeable observers predicted that if the Syrian Government responded to peaceful demonstrations with brutal force, including mass roundups and torture — as in fact it did — then demonstrations would increasingly turn violent. They also predicted that the unchecked spread of violence would lead to a rise in radicalization, extremism and terrorism. We were also forewarned about the next step: a proxy war, with regional and international players arming one side or the other.

All of those dire predictions have come to pass. Now we face the grim possibility of long-term civil war, destroying Syria's rich tapestry of interwoven communities. That would have tragic implications for Syria's people and could affect stability across the region. We must not let that prediction come true. All of us have a responsibility to the people of Syria. We must use all of the peaceful means provided for in the United Nations Charter to help them unite around a Syrian-led transition process that is based on dialogue and compromise, not bullets and arrests.

I have said many times how much I regret the divisions that have paralysed action in the Security Council. On 30 June in Geneva, Foreign Ministers of the Action Group on Syria, including the five permanent members of the Council, agreed on an action plan. Now, with the situation having worsened, they must again find common ground. The immediate interests of the Syrian people must be paramount over any larger rivalries over influence.

Despite the difficulties, the United Nations is active on the ground. Through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and our country team, we continue to deliver humanitarian assistance to those whom we can reach. The United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, despite the deteriorating security environment, plays an essential role in monitoring developments. United Nations human rights officials continue to work towards documentation that can help with essential accountability. And the Joint Special Envoy, Kofi Annan, in accordance with the mandate provided by the Assembly in resolution 66/253 and by the League

Arab States in February, has sought to engage with Syrians across the political spectrum — and with those who have influence inside Syria — in an attempt to use diplomacy to end the bloodshed and move towards a Syrian-led political transition.

Yesterday I announced with deep regret the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy. Kofi Annan deserves our deepest admiration for his efforts over the past several months. He brought tremendous skill and determination to the task, and I am indebted to him and his team for all they have tried to achieve. Yet both the Government and the opposition forces spurned the hand offered to them and continue to demonstrate their determination to rely on violence. The sharp differences in the Security Council themselves made the Envoy's work more difficult.

I am consulting with League of Arab States Secretary-General Nabil El Araby on the appointment of a successor to carry on that crucial peacemaking effort. But let me be clear: mediation can only succeed when there is a commitment to solving conflict through dialogue, and real leverage to back it up. I want to praise the commitment and courage of all those in the United Nations family who are working in Syria. I shudder to think how much worse the situation would be if the United Nations were absent. I urge Member States to continue to provide support and the mandate for our work.

The conflict in Syria is a test of everything that the Organization stands for. I do not want today's United Nations to fail that test. I want us all to show the people of Syria and the world that we have learned the lessons of Srebrenica. United international pressure can make a difference. The Syrian people need action. Their aspirations have been denied. Their suffering is profound, and the increasing militarization only promises worse. The primary responsibility for stopping the violence rests with those on the ground, particularly the Government. But their refusal to lay down arms does not absolve the rest of us of the need to act. I urge all members of the Assembly to face up to the collective responsibilities we shoulder.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.57*.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting to discuss the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. I am honoured to address the General Assembly today in my capacity as Chair of the Group of Arab States and on behalf of the nearly 60 States that have joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/66/L.57*.

A few months ago, on 16 February, the General Assembly adopted resolution 66/253, based on the decisions of the Arab League. Pursuant to that, Mr. Kofi Annan was appointed Joint Special Envoy on behalf of both the United Nations and the Arab League. Since then, Mr. Annan has sought a peaceful and comprehensive solution to the Syrian crisis, starting with, among other things, the six-point plan, which was followed by the establishment of the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and, more recently, by the the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). During that time, Mr. Annan attempted to achieve the most basic of goals: stopping the Government killing machine, which has been slaughtering the courageous Syrian people, the use of heavy weapons and attacks on, and bombings of, residential neighbourhoods, and allowing humanitarian assistance to be delivered to hundreds of thousands of those affected.

What was the response to the six-point plan? There were six massacres: in Bab Amr, Rastan, Houla, Tremseh, Qubair and, today, Aleppo. Moreover, instead of protecting the international observers and facilitating their mission, the Syrian authorities left them in danger and in fear for their lives, leading them to pull back and take refuge in their residences. As for the political solution, it was nowhere to be found. On 11 July Mr. Annan delivered a report to the Security Council in which he held the Syrian authorities primarily responsible for the deterioration of the situation, the continued violations of human rights and the intensified military action, including the use of heavy weapons. However, when Mr. Annan appealed to the Council to demand unanimously that the Syrian Government abide by its obligations and understand that a failure to comply would have consequences, the Council's efforts were blocked by a double veto that implied that the Council was turning a blind eye to the painful reality of Syria's situation. That reality that has become a grave threat to peace and security at the regional and international levels, in addition to the contribution that these actions have made to the suffering of the Syrian people.

With that in mind, the group of sponsoring States felt obliged to bring the matter before the General Assembly to demand that it uphold its responsibilities

in the face of the Security Council's failure to deal with the crisis and respond swiftly to the Joint Special Envoy's appeal. We are therefore introducing draft resolution A/66/L.57* with the goal of reaffirming that the international community will not tolerate what is happening in Syria or accept the ongoing killings, persecution and massacres, and that it is time to launch a peaceful transfer of power in order to fulfil the aspirations of the Syrian people and preserve the blood of their children. Moreover, the draft resolution aims to guarantee the security, safety, equality, rights and duties of every sector of the Syrian people, whatever their ethnic, religious or sectarian affiliations, as well as to assert the joint responsibility of the international community for protecting Syrian citizens and maintaining international peace and security.

The most recent development in the Syrian crisis is Mr. Annan's abandonment of his mission as an expression of his frustration and impotence in the face of the Security Council's failure to give him the support, tools and means necessary for the success of his mission. In addition, the violent air and artillery attacks that Syrian troops continue to mount against the city of Aleppo while branding it an enemy make this action more important than ever. Meanwhile, the States sponsoring the draft resolution responded to the observations of various Member States during the consultative meetings by making appropriate amendments based on their suggestions and views. We therefore introduce this draft resolution in full confidence that the conscience of the world will not ignore the distress and cries of the Syrian people, who are facing the artillery and tanks head on. We urge the Assembly, in the name of the children of Bab Amr, the martyrs of Aleppo, the victims of Qubair and Houla, and Syrian men and women everywhere, to uphold its humanitarian, moral and historical responsibilities by voting with us in favour of the draft resolution.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/66/L.57, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic". Before giving the floor to those who wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is strangely paradoxical that the States that sponsored the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.57* have submitted it under agenda item 34, entitled "Prevention of armed conflict"; yet, by providing weapons to the terrorist groups, those same States have played a major role in weaponizing the Syrian situation and thwarting the achievement of the desired political solution. The members of the General Assembly know all about those activities. The French Minister for Foreign Affairs acknowledged as much only three days ago, when he noted that the armed groups,

> "are being supplied with weapons. According to the information we have, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and probably others are supplying weapons."

Various Western media sources have confirmed the same, adding that American anti-aircraft Stinger missiles had been delivered to the armed groups via Turkey.

In addition, some sponsors of the draft resolution have been leading a hysterical, politicized media and intelligence campaign against my country. They have provided all sorts of financial and logistical support to the armed terrorist groups, while supplying nothing of the sort to the honest, peaceful and legitimate domestic opposition. Those States have also provided the armed groups with political and media support and enforced unilateral sanctions that not only conflict with the six-point plan, but also constitute an unjust and illegitimate siege against the Syrian nation, in violation of relevant United Nations resolutions.

Those actions have exacerbated the same humanitarian situation on the ground that certain parties have lamented in their statements. If those same States that have expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Syria were sincerely concerned, they would have allocated the billions of dollars spent on financing and arming terrorist groups and providing them with communication systems and lethal equipment towards humanitarian assistance instead. It should be noted that all of the promises made by those States with respect to providing humanitarian assistance were no more than a distraction to make the Syrian Government appear as the obstacle to such assistance. No one in Syria has seen any evidence of such assistance so far, in spite of an agreement made several months ago with the United Nations concerning the humanitarian response plan.

At the same time, the greatest fallacy is that certain sponsors of the draft resolution — including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar — can in no way, shape or form be considered as bastions of democracy and

respect for human rights. Those States are governed by despotic oligarchies that have not hesitated in oppressing their people and killing peaceful protesters both within and outside their borders. The level of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in those countries is considered to be among the worst in the world, according to well-documented reports issued by international human rights and legal institutions, as well as by members of the Saudi Arabian, Baharaini and Qatari opposition both in those countries and among the diasporas.

Moreover, other States sponsoring the draft resolution include major contributors to the deliberate deterioration of the situation in Syria. They lack any credibility with respect to compliance with United Nations resolutions, given previous experiences that have confirmed that those States manipulated many resolutions that they themselves crafted to suit their own interests and to create excuses for military intervention in other States. Such excuses have included eliminating weapons of mass destruction and protecting civilians and human rights, along with many other important humanitarian principles. Those were in fact never truly their objectives, but merely slogans used to intervene in the affairs of other States, force change in systems of Government, and push States into civil war, sectarian conflict and general chaos.

In that respect, we draw the attention of Member States to the danger of subjecting this international Organization to media-generated financial and political pressure. In that manner, those same States have provided cover for the spread of religiously sanctioned terrorism throughout the world and for underminig stability and security. We also wish to highlight the danger of having the Organization contribute to efforts to convey some kind of legitimacy to agendas that have resulted in eroding the confidence of Member States in the rule of law at the international level, especially after the invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and the manipulation of the fate of many developing countries, especially in Africa.

Syria has experienced a series of suicide terrorist attacks in the course of the current crisis. The relevant Syrian authorities have succeeded in arresting and killing a large number of Arab and non-Arab terrorists belonging to Al-Qaida and other Salafi and Wahabi extremist groups that are ideologically and intellectually affiliated with Al-Qaida. The paradox there is that some of the countries that have continuously denounced terrorism and the activities of Al-Qaida and have waged war under the same slogan are today, directly or indirectly, supporting the increasing terrorist activities of Al-Qaida and other extremist terrorist groups in Syria, in an effort to create chaos. It is no longer a secret that some States have facilitated, financed and incited the sending of terrorists to Syria from all over the world. From that perspective we can understand how the sponsors of the draft resolution have deliberately avoided any reference to those terrorists in the draft resolution, for in so doing they would have had to denounce themselves, before denouncing the terrorists.

Many Western countries that are combating so-called terrorist sleeper cells in their territories are at the same time awakening similar terrorist sleeper cells in Syria. Some Arab, regional and internationally well-known States have been carrying out public organized campaigns to incite violence and terrorist acts in Syria, despite it being well known that all of the domestic criminal statutes of Member States stipulate that the instigator of a crime shall receive a punishment equal to that of the perpetrator. Also, resolutions of the United Nations and international conventions, especially those related to criminal justice and the fight against terrorism, stipulate that States, groups and individuals that incite violence and terrorism should be criminalized as well. In addition, the Holy Koran itself states that, when it comes to inciting murder and discord,God says that discord and internal dissent are worse than acts of murder.

The question that we all must address here today, therefore, is whether the intention of the draft resolution before the Assembly truly is to implement national and international laws in order to hold accountable those involved in inciting terrorism and violence and causing the murder of Syrians and the destruction of property and infrastructure in an attempt to sow discord and provoke internal fighting among Syrians.

In line with the issues I have mentioned, it is no surprise that today we find ourselves faced with a draft resolution that, at best, can be described as misleading and hysterical. The draft resolution violates all principles of international law, first and foremost the principles of respect for national sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

It is therefore clear that the adoption of the draft resolution would send the wrong message to the extremists and terrorists in Syria and beyond, in particular that the terrorist acts that they are undertaking

instead of dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes have the support and the encouragement of Member States. That will escalate the violence and foster terrorism both in Syria and throughout the region. Terrorism will certainly extend to those areas that have fostered terrorism, including some States that are sponsors of the draft resolution.

We therefore request that the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.57* be put to the vote. We call on all States not to be an indirect partner in supporting chaos and terrorism, in intervening in the internal affairs of States and in trying to legitimize unilateral sanctions. We appeal to all participants to vote against the draft resolution for all the reasons I have mentioned, in support of the principles that we all uphold, including the sovereign equality of all States and the right of peoples to self-determination and to choose their political systems free of any outside interference.

We had expected the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to submit for consideration a draft resolution on the its Red Sea islands of Sanafir and Tiran, which are occupied by Israel, rather than one intent on manipulating the status and fate of Palestinian refugees in Syria and on shedding crocodile tears over what he called the blood of the Syrian nation, which we hold very dear to our hearts.

The incitement to murder has reached a level whereby Saudi Arabian and Qatari media are no longer satisfied with targeting my country but have attacked me personally and members of my family in an immoral, unethical and shameful way. I stand here proud to defend the interests of my nation against all conspiracies against my country, whatever they may be. The same media have attacked me in special programmes, lasting several hours, that have included fabricated lies and false statements intended to destroy the reputation of members of my family. They have even used social media sites to incite the killing of Syrians inside and outside Syria. Is that how we combat terrorism? Is that how diplomatic work is carried out? Is that what diplomacy is all about?

All participants are ambassadors defending the interests of their countries. Diplomacy is one thing, but having members of one's family targeted on that account is something else entirely. I leave that to the consciences of all members. I should also like to say that I and various other Syrian diplomats have received murder threats emanating from websites in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United States.

Allow me to conclude by saying that you, Mr. President, have taken a predetermined position on the draft resolution in form and content. We find that to be a violation of rule 106 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which requires the President of the General Assembly to be impartial and to conduct the meeting without intervention on any draft resolution. However, unfortunately, you, Mr. President, have violated that provision for possibly the tenth time during your presidency.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution before us (A/66/L.57*) is an intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign and independent State. It proposes setting up protection mechanisms against a sovereign country, namely, the Syrian Arab Republic. The draft resolution lacks objectivity. It describes a long list of acts abrogating human rights attributed to the Government of Syria, but minimizes or conceals the violations of human rights by terrorist groups and the armed opposition.

The draft resolution ignores the political and constitutional reforms promoted by the Syrian Government towards an inclusive, democratic and peaceful national agreement in order to meet the hopes for change of the Syrian people and the Arab people in general. Every sovereign State has the legitimate right to defend its national security and to protect the public and private property of its country. If the rule of law is to be respsected at the national and international levels, that right cannot be denied or violated.

The Syrian Government is not facing a democratic opposition that uses peaceful and constitutional means to achieve its goals. As we know, it is an opposition that practices and supports terrorism and that survives through foreign support. That armed opposition refuses to participate in the democratic and pluralistic dialogue that we, as peace-lovers, encourage in the world.

The only viable option to put an end to the armed violence in Syria, in all its forms, is through a sincere and inclusive political dialogue. In that regard, a ceasefire that contributes to the goal of peace and the reconciliation of that brotherly Arab people must immediately be established. We support all initiatives in pursuit of peace and the peaceful settlement of the disputes in Syria.

Venezuela has supported the six-point plan proposed by Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. That

plan retains all its validity. We regret the resignation of Kofi Annan. Warmongers and those who favour military intervention sabotaged his efforts for peace. We reiterate the need to implement that plan without delay, regardless of who is appointed to replace him.

We welcome the diplomatic efforts of the Russian Federation that led to the holding of the meeting of the Action Group for Syria on 30 June in Geneva. Venezuela supports the positions taken by Russia, China and other countries that defend the principles of sovereignty, self-determination and territorial integrity enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We commend them for opposing foreign intervention and for advocating a Syrian-led solution to the issues of that sovereign nation.

With regard to the attacks against Syria, on 1 August President Hugo Chávez Frías denounced those Governments that have not abandoned their imperialist attempts to impose their forms of Government on the peoples of the South, and asserted that Venezuela recognized President Bashar Al-Assad and his Government and not the terrorists who are engaged in bombings.

Venezuela is extremely concerned about interventionist initiatives in the internal affairs of the Syrian nation. It is deplorable to see the sponsoring of international political events that bring together Syrian political opponents who include representatives of groups that support or engage in violence or terrorism. The financing and arming of these opposition groups from abroad should be condemned. Those practices violate the most elementary principles of international law and constitute a de facto diplomatic recognition of political groups operating outside the law and defy the legal institutions of the Syrian State. They are a flagrant violation to the sovereignty of a country and of the principles that govern international law, as expressed in the Charter of the United Nations. If such practices were to continue, they would promote the establishment of the law of the jungle in international relations. The Government of my country calls for an in-depth reflection on the dire consequences that could arise from such practices in future diplomatic relations between sovereign countries.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela strongly appeals for respect for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of a sovereign country, and demands an end to foreign intervention in the Syrian Arab Republic. We call for respect for the human rights of all Syrians, regardless of their political position, ethnicity or religious beliefs. We reject unilateral and extraterritorial measures aimed at imposing new sanctions and suffering on the Syrian people. History has shown that sanctions and foreign intervention in the internal affairs of States do not solve the problems that affect such countries, but, on the contrary, compound them. We urge the relevant agencies of the United Nations to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the violence in that brotherly Arab country. Such assistance must be provided urgently, in respect for its sovereignty and hence in coordination with the authorities of that country.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, consistent with its principled position of respect for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, will vote against draft resolution A/66/L.57*.

Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba will vote against draft resolution A/66/L.57* because we believe that it would not help in any way to resolve the situation that is tearing the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic apart but could, on the contrary, lead to greater instability and violence. It is a biased draft resolution that selectively addresses current events in that country and that could even open the door to foreign military intervention, of which we have had unfortunate experience in the recent past.

Cuba believes that an end must be put to all acts of violence, massacres and terrorist actions that have taken innocent lives in Syria. However, for that purpose, the transfer of weapons and money to and the training of insurgency groups must end; such actions have become the open, daily practice of the United States Government and its European allies in order to defeat sovereign Governments by force. That is the clearest manifestation of the policy in favour of regime change prevailing in Washington, D.C., and other NATO capitals.

The media manipulation must also end. We view with concern how the Western media empires are openly interpreting the situation in Syria for political purposes, thus inciting worse and more brutal bloodshed.

Let there be no mistake — Cuba condemns the deaths of innocent persons wherever they may occur, and condemns foreign interference in the internal affairs of States. Cuba has always supported and

today reaffirms the right of the Syrian people to the full enjoyment of self-determination and sovereignty without foreign manipulation or intervention of any kind.

Mr. Laher (South Africa): South Africa deplores the violence and the tremendous loss of life in Syria, which are fast spiralling out of control. We are alarmed by the latest developments on the ground. The increase in the levels of violence being perpetrated by both sides, including the use of heavy weapons, is shocking and should be condemned. In that climate, the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria is regretted.

My delegation joins others in conveying our deepest sympathy to the Syrian people for the significant loss of life and the mass displacement of the population.

We appreciate the efforts of regional actors, including the League of Arab States, and of the United Nations agencies, the International Committee of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in assisting to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population. We remind the Assembly that the International Committee of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies recently classified the situation in Syria as meeting the conditions of an internal armed conflict. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also stated that there are indications that the situation in Syria, at least in certain areas, may amount to a non-international armed conflict, thus entailing obligations on both sides under international law. In such conditions all parties have responsibilities and obligations under international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, in a complex, divided society such as Syria's there can be no military solution. Ultimately, the parties in Syria will have to negotiate a settlement. The question is whether they do so now or after a bloody and protracted war. We are therefore deeply disappointed that the Security Council has not been able to apply pressure to both sides to bring an end to the violence and to comply with their respective obligations under the six-point plan. The only way to achieve a solution reflective of the will of the people of Syria is through an all-inclusive political process.

We support the idea of the General Assembly speaking with one voice through a resolution. However, we maintain that draft resolution A/66/L.57* could have been much more balanced, to accurately reflect the actual situation on the ground. The draft resolution should have been clearer in recognizing that there are two or more sides to the Syrian crisis. An unbalanced resolution of the Assembly may be viewed as supporting one side over the other.

South Africa reiterates that there are obligations on all parties to cease the violence and to comply with the six-point plan. While bearing in mind that the Syrian Government bears the primary responsibility to halt violence, the draft resolution is not strong enough in its call on the armed opposition groups to refrain from violence and to comply with their requirements under the six-point plan. Mediation efforts in conflict situations are not served by pressuring only one side of a conflict.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General said that the United Nations remained committed to diplomacy in pursuing an end to violence and a Syrian-led solution that meets the legitimate democratic aspirations of its people. Additionally, a few weeks ago, the Joint Special Envoy himself requested the Security Council to send a strong message to all parties that there would be consequences for non-compliance with the six-point plan. South Africa supports stern action by the United Nations in support of that process, in line with the recommendations of the Joint Special Envoy, to ensure that a message is sent to all sides that they should engage with the Envoy's mediation process.

Despite our misgivings about some aspects of the text, and in the light of the urgency of resolving the Syrian crisis, we believe that it is necessary for the United Nations to speak with one voice in taking action.

Mr. Archondo (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia would like to explain to the Assembly the reasons behind its intention to vote against draft resolution A/66/L.57*, which is before us today.

The Syrian people are living through a painful and bloody period. No one in the Hall can remain indifferent to the suffering of a people caught in the crossfire. It is the duty of the United Nations to answer that people's call and to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. Indeed, we all agree that Syria is an open wound that must be treated as soon as possible. The issue has ceased to be a regional or local one; it has morphed into an issue the gravity of which touches us all.

While the Organization must indeed take action, its limits are obvious, as clearly defined in Article 2 of the

United Nations Charter, which forbids it to intervene in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States. Bolivia believes that the draft resolution before us goes well beyond Article 2 of the Charter. That is why we reject it.

Nevertheles, we are pleased to participate in this debate on the situation in Syria, if only for a few minutes. Our first question is how the United Nations can meaningfully contribute to a solution to the political crisis in Syria. We believe that today's draft resolution would make matters worse. With all respect to those who support it, Bolivia believes that draft resolution A/66/L.57* goes down the wrong path. If adopted, it will not lead to solutions but, on the contrary, may exacerbate problems. That is because the main concern behind the draft resolution is not to end the violence but rather to break the Damascus Government. Anyone who does not agree with that has only to read. The draft resolution accuses the Syrian Government 14 times of committing the most serious crimes imaginable. It accuses the Government of massacres, arbitrary executions, murders, persecutions, detentions, disappearances, impeding access to medical treatment, torture, rape and preventing the burial of the dead. It paints a picture of a Government that attacks the civilian population in an indiscriminate, savage way.

The draft resolution 14 times accuses the Syrian Government of multiple crimes, but makes only one negative reference to the opposition in that country, saying it has committed a few human rights abuses. There is not one word about the terrorist attack that ended the life of Syria's Minster of Defence on 18 July. There is not one word about the clandestine transport of arms across borders with neighbouring States. There is not one word about the so-called Free Syrian Army, generously supported by Powers interested in the overthrow of the Damascus Government. There is not one word about the role of the Central Intelligence Agency or of Al-Qaida. There is not one word about the armed campaign to sow the seeds of a civil war, richly fueled from outside and in. There is not one word about the arrival in Syria of terrorist groups intent on imposing an Islamic State in the region.

There is no State machinery in place in Syria to liquidate the civilian population. What there is in Syria is an armed confrontation between regular State forces and non-State actors financed and armed from abroad. The draft resolution does not mention that reality. It does not say how peace might be achieved in Syria once the so-called political transition is set in motion. It does not tell us how the civil war it promotes can be prevented from spinning out of control into a scenario of indiscriminate sectarian violence, enflaming the entire region. It does not explain how Syria can avoid falling into the chaos that Iraq lived through and continues to live under after Saddam Hussein's fall. It says nothing about the possibility that various armed factions may take control of the territory, filling the power gap. Syria is not on the path of the Arab Spring. On the contrary, it seems to be on the road to chaos and civil war. The United Nations should not contribute to that.

Let us not fool ourselves. The draft resolution is aimed mainly at breaking the back of the Damascus Government. Those who do not believe that should read the text. Outrageously, the draft resolution mentions eight times the need to drive forward a political transition towards a new Government. Not only does it tell the Syrian people what they must do, but it gives them the exact recipe — a democratic, multi-party, pluralistic political system. Even worse, it asks the General Assembly to believe in the unity and cohesion of the opposition forces.

Finally, the Bolivian delegation regrets the fact that this issue has been brought before the General Assembly in the way it has, that is, after the Security Council has failed in its own consideration. This is not appropriate. It is being done very hurriedly, without seeking due consensus, in a mere three days, and without hearing all points of view. Does this represent love of democracy on the part of those who claim to be its main defenders? Is it the way to teach the Syrian people what democracy is and that it is something to be desired?

Because of the way in which it is being adopted, and because we find its content not only unsatisfactory but alarming, Bolivia rejects draft resolution A/66/L.57*. In that spirit, we call on countries that are members of the Southern Cone Common Market to follow the decision taken on 29 July by our heads of State, who affirmed that the principles governing the settlement of the crisis in Syria should be dialogue, political negotation and respect for human rights, territorial sovereignty, non-intervention, the free self-determination of peoples and territorial integrity.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Since the General Assembly's adoption in February of resolution 66/253 concerning Syria, we now find ourselves facing a very critical situation and great change. That change is not a positive one;

it is very negative. Its impact is particularly negative on the entire region of the Middle East. It will lead to eventual disaster. The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to express its deep concern about this and to once again clarify its principled position, in order to address the Syrian issue fairly and peacefully.

First, sovereignty should be respected and fully observed. The Charter stipulates that sovereignty is the fundamental key factor in United Nations affairs. The Syrian Arab Republic is a full-fledged Member State, and President Bashar Al-Assad's Government is a democratically elected Government.

Secondly, the principle of non-interference should be respected. We have seen many instances in which interference has had a disastrous impact; we do not have to look far, but merely shift the focus slightly from Syria to some of its neighbours. Military intervention and military interference have unleashed sectarian violence, terrorist conflicts, armed conflict and the mass killing of innocent civilians. That has been the case in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States talks a great deal about the so-called protection of civilians, but what is it doing in Iraq and Afghanistan? It is essential that we look at that important factor. All the United States wants is regime change. Once regime change has occurred, it does not care what happens; it does not care whether civilians or terrorists are killing each other. It is only about regime change. Draft resolution A/66/L.57* is closely related to that. The Security Council vetoed the draft resolution sponsored by the United States (S/2012/538).

Thirdly, the only way to settle this issue is through political dialogue and by peaceful means. The Syrian people are the only people who know what is in their best interests. Killing each other is not helping, and outside interference cannot solve that problem. Outside interference, as I indicated when referring to Iraq and Afghanistan, only kills civilians. Beyond that example, when the same country talks of protection of civilians it is nothing but hypocrisy. The political dialogue should be a Syrian-led process aimed at improving the future, the happiness and the stability of the people.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been closely following the developments in the war currently raging in the Syrian Arab Republic. We have been alarmed and revolted by the scenes and stories emanating from that war. The small but vibrant Syrian and Lebanese community within our country is also directly and often personally affected by the spiraling violence and atrocities in Syria, particularly as the war has moved to the major cities of Damascus and Aleppo.

On 31 May, the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines made a statement to our national Parliament condemning the massacre that took place in the region of Houla in western Syria, and calling unequivocally for the perpetrators to be held accountable and brought to justice. It is in that spirit of genuine outrage, alarm and revulsion that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines views the current draft resolution on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/66/L.57*).

Today's draft resolution has many positive elements that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines enthusiastically supports. We share its concern for the civilian victims of this war, particularly the innocent women and children who have been killed or victimized by the warring parties. We are similarly concerned about the influx of Syrian refugees to neighbouring States. Above all, we echo the draft resolution's expression of profound regret at the thousands of deaths, and extend heartfelt condolences to the families affected.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also wholeheartedly endorses the reaffirmation of support for the six-point peace plan delineated by outgoing Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan and the commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. We likewise condemn any and all human rights abuses being committed by any party in Syria, and support efforts towards extending humanitarian assistance to the affected populations. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also strongly reiterates the importance of the draft resolution's call for political dialogue and the peaceful settlement of this spiraling conflict, which does not appear to have a military solution.

However, other aspects of the draft resolution give us pause, and lead us to question whether our laudable desire to speak and act on this matter has caused us to overlook many of the indisputable facts on the ground of this conflict, and many of the principles that undergird the Organization. Primarily, we are concerned about the obvious omissions from the draft resolution that create not only a lack of balance, but a far more troubling implication that our silence amounts

to consent or endorsement of certain actions and actors. It is a documented fact, for example, that elements of the opposition forces have opted to assassinate members of the Syrian Government, either individually or through the use of crude bombs that also murder innocent civilians. Surely the international community cannot catalogue the violations of the Syrian authorities while turning a blind eye to the type of despicable terrorism that we have condemned in every other context and every other nation.

We are also aware of the indisputable presence and activity of Al-Qaida and other extremists in Syria, and their role in some of the anti-Government activity. We must unambiguously condemn this element in the conflict, for history has taught us the danger of ignoring Al-Qaida when its interests may align, however fleetingly, with those of other, more civilized actors. Instead of outright condemnation of the barbaric elements, the draft resolution encourages cohesion among all elements of the Syrian opposition, many of whom the international community knows nothing about. There are many principled and patriotic Syrians who seek to staunchly oppose the Government through peaceful and legitimate means. It is irresponsible for us to ask those groups to find common cause with those extremists and terrorists who may also clothe themselves in the opposition banner.

Similarly, we note that the draft resolution has been submitted under agenda item 34, "Prevention of armed conflict". As such, we feel it imperative that the draft resolution to acknowledge the role played by many States in exacerbating and intensifying the armed conflict in Syria through the provision of arms and ammunition to all sides in the war. The international community cannot call for the prevention of armed conflict without confronting the continuing role played by those who persist in arming and supplying all of the combatants. If we are honest about seeking an end to hostilities, it is our collective responsibility to call on the arms suppliers to cease their trade in the tools of death. Our silence on that crucial point is tantamount to an endorsement and encouragement of illicit arms traders, and runs counter to the spirit of the recently-concluded month-long effort to secure a global arms trade treaty.

We cannot simply pay lip service to the ideas of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference. They are the principles upon which the Assembly is founded. If it is that we seek to depart from those principles, it must not be done with a nod and a wink or benign neglect, but with a frank examination of their applicability in our modern context.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also concerned about the failure to call for a simultaneous ceasefire and pullback by Government and opposition forces and militias alike. To call for the Administration to withdraw its forces to its barracks in the face of advancing opposition forces in Damascus and Aleppo is to ask the authorities to cede control of those cities as a prerequisite for political dialogue. Such a position seems to reflect neither the military realities on the ground nor a genuine desire to craft a workable solution to the war.

There are other aspects of concern. For example, the responsibility to protect is a concept whose contours and full implications have neither been defined nor agreed upon by the United Nations. Its inclusion in the preamble of the draft resolution is unnecessarily divisive at a time when unity should be our objective.

We note also the draft resolution's call in paragraph 16 for the establishment of "a democratic, pluralistic political system, in which all citizens are equal". Saint Vincent and the Grenadines proudly possesses such a political system, which we work tirelessly to improve and consolidate. As such, we have considerable sympathy for the sentiment captured by such a call. However, we are unclear as to whether the General Assembly has the legal, moral or historical authority to externally impose any political system upon the citizens of another State.

Given those concerns and despite our unambiguous support for many of the key pillars of the draft resolution, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines must regrettably abstain in today's voting. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines agonized long and hard over the decision to abstain, and we regret that an opportunity has been missed today for the General Assembly to speak with one voice on the conflict, which we all deplore and which we all want to end as quickly and as peacefully as possible. Even in the light of the welcome recent changes made to the text, our failure to make the extra effort to craft a draft resolution that could enjoy near unanimous support is even more regrettable in the wake of yesterday's statements by the outgoing Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria, Kofi Annan, in which he cited the disunity of the international community as one of the factors contributing to the deepening crisis in Syria. Special Envoy Annan made clear that the international

community must be balanced in its pronouncements and united in its approach if we are to save Syria from further bloodshed. It is in those areas — balance and unity — that we feel that more work could have been done to capture our collective horror and desire for change. Similarly, Mr. Annan's other underlying message — that authorities who show little concern for the loss of their citizens' lives will lose the moral authority to govern — is also an essential point to which Saint Vincent and the Grenadines readily subscribes.

Today, even while abstaining, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines adds its voice to the chorus of responsible States calling for, first, the immediate cessation of all violence between and among all parties to the conflict; secondly, the commencement of an inclusive political process geared towards a locally crafted and negotiated solution to the conflict; and, thirdly, the avoidance of any actions by other parties that will exacerbate the violence, make a negotiated solution more difficult, or serve as a pretext for military intervention or undue external influence in the sovereign affairs of States.

Our abstention must be taken neither as support for the Syrian authorities nor as an endorsement of the opposition's methods. Instead, it is a call for balance, compromise and unity. As such, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its support for a peaceful solution to the war that is not motivated by geopolitical or strategic interests, but instead driven by the honest desire to end a catastrophic human tragedy and the need to honour the memory of the tens of thousands of Syrians who have needlessly and tragically died in the conflict.

Mr. Morejón (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador views with concern the deterioration of the human rights situation and the crisis in the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic. On several occasions, we have expressed our consternation at the serious human rights violations that have taken place since the beginning of the crisis. We have condemned them and insisted that they should not enjoy impunity and that the perpetrators of the acts of violence and those who provide arms and munitions to the various actors, including organized terrorist groups, be punished.

Today Ecuador reiterates its firm condemnation of human rights violations, wheresoever they may arise. We express our solidarity with the Syrian people, in particular the victims of the widespread violence and their families. We regret the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan, and hope that the original six-point plan will endure and that the parties will contribute to its implementation with an immediate cessation of violence. We reject the attempt through draft resolution A/66/L.57* to change the mandate of Special Envoy Annan, focusing it on a political objective that promotes the agenda of some sectors and not the needed ceasefire.

Ecuador is concerned over the imbalance in the language of the draft resolution, which does not sufficiently take all the parties responsible for the crisis into account, and tends to polarize the conflict without contributing to a solution in which all Syrians participate and peace is restored in the context of a strict respect for the sovereignty and independence of Syria.

My delegation insists that matters related to the human rights situation should be addressed by the Human Rights Council in Geneva, which is the competent body. Submitting such a draft resolution to the General Assembly in New York only contributes to politicizing the issue and does not truly help the the victims of armed violence in Syria.

I raise these considerations in order to indicate that the delegation of Ecuador has instructions to abstain in the voting.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation has asked for the floor to explain its position with regard to the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.57* before the voting.

In the view of my delegation, the draft resolution is a deviation from all the efforts being pursued at the international level for a peaceful resolution to the Syrian crisis. The draft resolution is also a deviation from the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, which prohibit interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. The draft resolution echoes the malicious desire of certain countries to topple the Government of Syria. That is an illegal action and condemnable by international law. It is only the Syrian people who should decide on their political fate.

The draft resolution fails to address the disastrous consequences of the different forms of foreign intervention. Such interventions, in terms of the arms and the sophisticated equipment that are being sent

across the borders to the rebels, have exacerbated the crisis in Syria. That has added fuel to the fire, leading to the deepening of the political and security crisis, with all its ramifications for the region. In recent months, many terrorist attacks have occurred in Syria, the latest of which took the lives of a number of senior officials in Damascus.

The operations by armed groups in Aleppo in the past couple of days have already left a heavy toll in human lives and property. The draft resolution fails to hold the armed groups and the terrorist groups led by Al-Qaida accountable for their activities and falls short of condemning foreign interference and the acts of violence by terrorists. It is clear who is behind arming and financing the armed and terrorist groups in Syria, some of whom are, regrettably, among the sponsors of the draft resolution.

The draft resolution encourages Member States to impose sanctions on Syria at a time when people in the affected areas are in dire need of basic living necessities. The call for sanctions constitutes collective punishment against the Syrian people. What is needed instead is a call on States to freeze any arms, financial and logistical support to the armed groups in Syria.

We very much regret that Mr. Kofi Annan has decided to end his work by the end of this month. We of course understand the reasons for his decision and the arduous position that he faced in advancing his mission. It is not a hidden fact that, after the recent meeting of the Security Council (see S/PV.6810), some permanent members rushed to pronounce the mission of the Special Envoy as dead and indicated that they would immediately pursue other means than the Security Council to overthrow the Government in Syria.

That approach is a blatant interference in Syrian internal affairs. We hope that, in the remaining days of his tenure, Mr. Annan will rigorously continue to pursue the goal of finding a peaceful political settlement to the Syrian crisis. We also hope that his replacement will work along the same lines and within the same mandate, which is to find a non-violent solution to the crisis. It is only through such a process that broader political reconciliation, national unity, public order, stability and prosperity are realizable for the Syrian people.

We are very concerned about the regional consequences of the continuation of violence and about any violation of Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity. We encourage the political parties to engage in political dialogue with the Syrian Government in order to find a peaceful political process. In that regard, we reiterate our readiness to host talks between the Syrian Government and the opposition parties.

As we have stated on other occasions, Syria has historically played an important role in the Middle East. Prolonged instability and unrest in Syria would have adverse consequences for peace and stability in the Middle East region. We should all work together for a comprehensive, effective and practical way to help find a peaceful resolution to the present crisis in Syria. The draft resolution in its present wording, despite some changes in the language, is still unbalanced and one-sided and does not reflect the reality of the situation in Syria. It conveys the wrong message on behalf of the Assembly. We are therefore not in a position to support the draft resolution, and we will vote against it.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): The Bahamas will support draft resolution A/66/L.57* because we believe that the welfare and safety of the people of Syria should be the paramount concern of this body and, indeed, of all bodies that make up the United Nations system.

The killings and bloodshed, as well as the human rights abuses inflicted on the people of Syria, particularly on the civilian population, must stop. The forces on the ground, both Government and opposition, in conjunction with civil society, must seek to carry out a dialogue on instituting a political process from which will evolve an agreed mechanism for moving the country in the direction of peace, security and development under the stewardship of a representative, democratic and inclusive Government. It is my delegation's conviction that the implementation of the Annan six-point plan remains the best starting point for that process.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to commend and express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Joint Special Envoy, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his unstinting and tireless efforts in trying to bring about a resolution to the crisis in Syria. His recent resignation is indeed regrettable. The Bahamas is of the view that, with the appropriate and sustained support of the international community, his could well have been a mission possible with concrete results that would have spared the people of Syria so much suffering. The Bahamas is convinced that that should remain the objective of the international community. We hope that the adoption of this draft resolution will be step in that direction.

It is unconscionable that the international community should find itself stymied in the face of such suffering and turmoil.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/66/L.57*, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/66/L.57*, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: the Comoros, France, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Mauritania, Micronesia, Montenegro, the Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino and Switzerland.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Burundi, Ecuador, Eritrea, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam

Draft resolution A/66/L.57 was adopted by 133 votes to 12, with 31 abstentions* (resolution 66/253 B).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote following the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Chile feels duty-bound to begin its statement by expressing its profound regret over the resignation of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan. Mr. Annan deserves recognition and gratitude for the intelligence, determination and courage with which he has carried out his delicate and complex functions. His enormous effort has been frustrated by the non-cooperation of the parties to the conflict, primarily the Government of Syria. Yesterday, the Government of Chile issued an official communiqué regretting the decision of the Joint Special Envoy, expressing hope for the speedy appointment of his successor, and calling for compliance with the six-point plan submitted by Mr. Annan, which has been endorsed by the United Nations.

The delegation of Chile voted in favour of resolution 66/253 B. Today, the General Assembly has raised its voice to vehemently condemn the massive and systematic violations of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic. The use of force against civilians, arbitrary executions, forced disappearances, torture, murder, persecutions of human rights activists, journalists and protesters, and extreme violence, including sexual violence against women and children, are unacceptable violations of human rights.

The Assembly has reaffirmed its condemnation following 17 months of political crisis. During that time, the crisis has gone from brutally repressed peaceful protests to a situation of virtual civil war, as denounced by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross. All parties to the conflict have the obligation to end the violence and the responsibility to respect civilians' rights to life and physical integrity. We regret the violence, the indiscriminate attacks and the use of heavy weapons, which have increased, resulting in many deaths, including those of women, children and vulnerable persons. Chile condemns violence from any source and demands an immediate cessation on the part of all parties. The resolution we have just adopted is precisely the appeal of the international community for the situation to end.

The delegation of Chile reiterates its support for the six-point plan, submitted by the Joint Special Envoy, and the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex), of 30 June. Both documents recognize the need for an inclusive political process, led by the Syrian people and in conditions determined by them. In that context, the international community, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, has the duty to cooperate to ensure that the Syrian people can find their way to political dialogue, and ultimately achieve the stability and prosperity that its noble people deserve.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and various social media outlets report atrocities and crimes for which there must be no impunity. The rule of law must prevail, and whoever may be responsible for serious human rights violations, including those that may constitute crimes against humanity, should be brought to justice.

We feel a special concern for the population, which needs humanitarian assistance. Chile calls for the facilitation of the secure delivery of timely assistance to the victims of the crisis. My delegation acknowledges the humanitarian efforts of the neighbouring countries of Syria, which have welcomed thousands of refugees. We also acknowledge the work done by the International Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, United Nations agencies and various non-governmental organizations in this vital matter.

Chile reiterates its support for the efforts of the Arab League to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria. We see special value in the contribution of regional organizations to conflict resolution.

Finally, as stated in the communiqué of the Government of Chile of 2 August,

> "Chile reaffirms its conviction that the Security Council must fulfil its key and urgent role in resolving the Syrian conflict under its mandate enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations".

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): Brazil voted in favor of resolution 66/253 B, just adopted, because we fully support the main message it conveys — the urgent need for a ceasefire, the cessation of violence in all its forms, and the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). Our decision also reflects our belief that the General Assembly could not remain silent as violence escalates in Syria and the ensuing human suffering increases.

The position we took today, which is coherent with Brazil's policy with regard to the Syrian crisis since its beginning, should also be seen as a message to all parties to renounce the use of force, since there is no military solution to the conflict. This is the only way to avoid a deeper descent into a spiral of destruction that, as witnessed elsewhere before, will further punish first and foremost the Syrian population.

The primary responsibility for ending violence, upholding the law — both domestic and international — and respecting human rights lies with the Government of Syria, as we have stated time and again. It must fully and immediately meet this grave and urgent responsibility. At the same time, we also insist that all parties fulfil their obligations to halt the violence and respect international humanitarian law, as well as actively engage in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict.

For its part, the international community has a key role to play in ensuring that the Annan plan and the road map envisaged by the Action Group for Syria

prevail. Our individual and collective support for those diplomatic efforts, in particular the end of violence and a consensual, Syrian-led political transition, must be resolute both in words and in deeds. In that regard, international stakeholders must refrain from any action that might deepen or prolong the conflict. That is in the interest not only of Syrians, but also of the international community as a whole. No legitimate purpose will be truly served by the further militarization of the conflict and increased destabilization of Syria.

Consistent with previous United Nations resolutions, the Annan plan and the communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex), Brazil remains of the view that any political transition should be inclusive and led by the Syrians themselves. What we can and should do is to encourage the parties to find a mutually acceptable solution that responds to the aspirations of the Syrian people to peace, justice, democracy and economic progress. Brazil hopes that the core message from the Assembly today will effectively help the parties in Syria to meet that challenge.

Finally, allow me to express Brazil's deep regret at Mr. Annan's decision not to renew his mandate. We have extended all possible support to his work, which we consider of great value. The six-point plan should continue to guide international efforts to help Syrians overcome the current conflict. Just as important, Mr. Annan's exemplary efforts should further inspire us in our determination to help the parties in urgently finding a peaceful solution.

The President: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers here in the Hall at 3 o'clock.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.